

Random Encounters

Ways of the Sword

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Proprietors and Conflicts

The two dueling schools are the products of their creators' visions, and neither would survive the demise of its creator for very long. The Way of the Flashing Blade Academy might last longer, but would devolve in the face of conflicts between the masters without Maralis's strong hand. And the Cat's Pride would disband almost immediately with the loss of its leader, Miromar.

Tendra Maralis, Master of the Way of the Flashing Blade

Tendra Maralis did not begin her career on the path of the duelist. Instead, she began as a street rogue. Abandoned by her parents when she was five years old (because they were killed by a rival thieves guild), she was raised by other street people and taught the arts of theft. Before she had become too entangled in the life of a thief to escape, she fell in love with a soldier and went with him on his campaign as a camp follower. During this experience, she learned to fight and enjoyed that far more than stealing. In fighting, she could prove her worth without causing another to suffer much loss. She was eventually taken into the army during that campaign because of losses suffered, and she made quite a name for herself. She made such a name for herself that her paramour ended their relationship out of jealousy. The idea of dueling had appealed strongly to her throughout her training, and when she returned from the campaign she sought out duelists to teach her the art.



Years later, she is now a master duelist and trains others in the art. Because of the street people who raised her, she sees the students as children of sorts, even the oldest ones. She requires that they all obey the rules of the school, but within that boundary treats them very well. She knows that laws and rules exist for a reason, and she tries to show her students what those reasons are. She believes people are more likely to obey rules for which they understand the reasons, and in general she has been proven correct.

Because of her lawful approach, she has stylistic differences with Miromar of the Cat's Claw, and with most people who approach dueling in a casual or chaotic way. Her more personal conflict with Miromar dates back to her days in the army (the exact details have been left for you to fit into your campaign). While she and Miromar are not bitter rivals, they are antagonistic toward each other and the students amplify that when they meet.

Tendra Maralis: Female human Rog 3/Ftr 4/Duelist 7; CR 14; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d6+3 plus 4d10+4 plus 7d10+7; hp 73; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 16; Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d6+2/18-20, +1 rapier); or +17/+12/+7 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA acrobatic attack, sneak attack +2d6; SQ canny defense, enhanced mobility, evasion, grace, precise strike, traps, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +15, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Balance +16, Bluff +12, Climb +11, Diplomacy +4, Hide +10, Intimidate +5, Jump +19, Listen +11, Move Silently +10, Perform +3, Sense Motive +11, Spot +13, Swim +5, Tumble +23, Use Magic Device +6; Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Whirlwind Attack.

Acrobatic Attack (Ex): If Tendra attacks by jumping at least 5 feet toward her opponent, jumping down at least 5 feet onto her opponent, or swinging on a rope or similar object into her opponent, she gains a +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls. A Jump check success of at least 5 feet is required to use this ability on any given attack. If the distance is greater than that between Tendra and her opponent, she can limit the distance to that of the opponent as a free action.

Canny Defense: When not wearing armor, Tendra adds her Intelligence bonus to her Dexterity bonus to modify Armor Class while wielding a melee weapon. If she is caught flat-footed or otherwise denied her Dexterity bonus, she also loses this bonus. This adjustment is already included in the statistics above.

Enhanced Mobility: When unarmored, Tendra gains an additional +4 bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity caused when she moves out of or within a threatened area (stacks with the +4 bonus for the Mobility feat).

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, Tendra takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Grace: Tendra gains an additional +2 competence bonus on all Reflex saving throws. This ability functions only when she is wearing no armor. This adjustment is already included in the statistics given above.

Precise Strike (Ex): Tendra can strike precisely with a one-handed piercing weapon, gaining a bonus 2d6 points of damage on her normal damage roll. When making a precise strike, she cannot attack with a weapon in her other hand, although she can defend with it (or, if she has the proficiency, a buckler). Tendra's precise strike works only against living creatures with discernable anatomies. Any creature that is immune to critical hits (including undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures) is not vulnerable to a precise strike, and any item or ability that protects a creature from critical hits (such as armor with fortification) also protects a creature from a precise strike.

Elaborate Parry (Ex): If Tendra chooses to fight defensively or use all-out defense in melee combat, she gains an additional +7 dodge bonus to her AC.

Possessions: +1 rapier, longbow, bracers of armor +2, orb of storms.

Miromar the Striped, Leader of the Cat's Claw Dueling Pride

Children tend to select a favorite animal as they grow up and to prefer things relating to that animal over all others. Bears, cats, dogs, birds, dolphins; whatever the choice, the child loves its chosen animal. In the case of Miromar of Elbern, cats were his favorite. They were his life, as it were, and he went so far as to have tiger stripes tattooed across his body when he left his family's home. The call of nature took strong hold of him as a youth, and he began his studies to become a druid as soon as he was old enough.

While a student druid, he learned about a different path that would let him be with his cherished tigers and lions and panthers. He did not really enjoy all the aspects of druidhood as he thought he would, so he embarked upon a path that led to becoming a catlord. But that alone did not hold his interest; as he learned to fight, he, too, was attracted to the way of dueling. For him, however, the fusion of the cat nature and the duelist is what attracted him, and it led him to his eventual profession as master of a duelist school built around the feline way of being.

To have set his school in the same city as Tendra Maralis he found to be an unlucky chance, but then even black cats are not immune to bad luck. He made the best of it, but found himself in confrontations with Maralis periodically over style (her more rigid style against his more freeform style) and an old grievance from the days when they both served in the war and she outshone just about every other soldier in the ranks (himself included). Thus, he is antagonistic toward her in public and private, but also strangely attracted to her. He attributes the attraction to some catlike feeling of contrariness, but he cannot ignore it. He doubts she is aware of his interest.

Miromar trains his students to be catlords or arcane duelists. He does not train in the duelist prestige class, since he never learned the skills that make Tendra Maralis the good fighter she is. He relies on trickery and his catlike speed to emulate the same skills. His students like the freeform, almost chaotic style, and he thinks they become accomplished fighters. In reality, they are only as good as the students of the Way of the Flashing Blade because of the tricks they learn to keep one step ahead of skilled fighters.

Miromar the Striped: Male human Drd 3/Ftr 2/Sor 1/Catlord 5/Arcane duelist 3; CR 14; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d8 plus 2d10 plus 1d4 plus 5d8 plus 3d10; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 10; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+1/18-20, rapier), or +11 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SQ animal bond, animal companion, *animal farspeech*, animal sense, animal speech, apparent defense, chosen weapon (rapier), dextrous attack, enchant chosen weapon (rapier), first totem, *lesser wild shape*, low-light vision, nature sense, scent, second totem, *share lesser form*, *summon animal* (1/day), trackless step, woodland stride; AL CN; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +10, Balance +5, Handle Animal +4, Hide +8, Intimidate +10, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Perform +7, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +3, Spot +5, Tumble +14, Wilderness Lore +10; Ambidexterity, Animal Control*, Animal Defiance*, Dodge, Mobility, Off-Hand Parry*, Skill Focus (Move Silently), Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Animal Bond: Miromar has a bond with all natural felines. Because of this bond, all felines automatically have a friendly attitude toward him. Animal bond also allows him to have one or more feline animal companions (as the druid's *animal friendship* spell) that total a maximum of 10 Hit Dice. He can train these animal companions just as a druid does.

Animal Companion: Miromar may have one or more animal companions. These animals are those that he has befriended with the spell *animal friendship*. The total Hit Dice of all animal companions at a time may not exceed 3.

Animal Farspeech (Sp): Miromar can use his animal speech ability to converse telepathically with any feline that he can sense with animal sense.

Animal Sense (Su): Miromar can sense felines in a radius of 25 miles. This ability does not allow him to communicate with the animals he senses.

Animal Speech (Ex): Miromar can converse at will with any natural feline as though a *speak with animals* spell were in effect. The creatures' responses, of course, are limited by their intelligence and perceptions.

Apparent Defense (Ex): Due to his trickery and force of personality, Miromar adds

his Charisma bonus (+2) to his Armor Class, in addition to his Dexterity bonus. Conditions that cause Miromar to lose his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class also cause him to lose this bonus. This adjustment is already figured into the statistics above.

Chosen Weapon: Miromar can imbue a rapier with powers to make himself appear more skilled. If that rapier is lost, he may choose another, but it takes seven days for a chosen weapon to bond to him so that it can be imbued with abilities.

Dexterous Attack (Ex): Because Miromar values successful hits over actual damage dealt, he can subtract an amount from his rapier's potential damage and add the same amount to his attack bonus. However, the weapon must do a minimum 1 point of damage. Miromar declares this power before rolling his attack, and the amount subtracted cannot exceed his base attack bonus.

Enchant Chosen Weapon (Ex): Miromar's rapier acts as if it has a +1 enhancement bonus, even though it does not. This class-granted bonus works for Miromar only when wielding his rapier.

First Totem: Miromar has Skill Focus (Move Silently) as a bonus feat.

Lesser Wild Shape (Sp): Miromar can wild shape into any natural feline. This ability otherwise functions exactly like the druid's *wild shape* ability, except that he can use it as often as desired.

Nature Sense: Miromar can identify plants and animals (their species and special traits) with perfect accuracy. He can determine whether water is safe to drink or dangerous.

Second Totem: Once per hour, Miromar can use the extraordinary ability to move at ten times his normal speed as a charge action.

Share Lesser Form (Sp): Miromar can share whichever animal form he is currently using with up to five willing individuals. This effect is identical to that of the *polymorph other* spell, except that its duration is 5 hours.

Summon Animal (Sp): Miromar can summon 1d3 felines once per day as though using the appropriate *summon nature's ally* spell, except that the duration is 5 rounds.

Trackless Step: Miromar leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked.

Woodland Stride: Miromar may move through natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at his normal speed and without suffering damage or other impairment. However, thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that are enchanted or magically manipulated to impede motion still affect him.

Animal Lord Spells Prepared (2/2; save DC 12 + spell level): 1st -- *camouflage**, *cure light wounds*; 2nd -- *adrenaline surge**, *cure moderate wounds*.

Druid Spells Prepared (4/3/2; save DC 12 + spell level): 0 -- *cure minor wounds*, *mending*, *virtue* (2); 1st -- *cure light wounds*, *faerie fire*, *magic fang*; 2nd -- *decomposition**, *speed of the wind**.

Sorcerer Spells Known (5/4; save DC 12 + spell level): 0 -- *detect magic*, *flare*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*; 1st -- *shield*, *true strike*.

Possessions: rapier, light crossbow, 20 bolts, *ioun stone* (lavender and green ellipsoid), *bracelet of friends*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Feats from *Masters of the Wild*:

Animal Control: You can rebuke or command creatures of the animal type as an evil cleric rebukes undead. To command an animal, you must be able to speak with it via a *speak with animals* effect, though you may issue your commands mentally if desired. The number of times per day that you can use this ability is equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier. Your highest caster level is the level at which you rebuke animals. Animals you command through this ability count against the HD limit of animals you can befriend through *animal friendship*.

Animal Defiance: You can turn (but not destroy) creatures of the animal type as a good cleric turns undead. The number of times per day that you can use this ability is equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier. Your highest caster level is the level at which you turn animals.

Feats from *Sword and Fist*:

Off-hand Parry: When fighting with two weapons and using the full attack action, on your action you can decide to attack normally or to sacrifice all your off-hand attacks for the round in exchange for a +2 dodge bonus to your AC. If you are also using a buckler, its AC bonus stacks. You can use only bladed or hafted weapons of a size category smaller than you with this feat.

Spells from *Masters of the Wild* (short descriptions only):

1st-Level Spells:

Camouflage -- Grants +10 on Hide checks

2nd-Level Spells:

Adrenaline surge -- Grants each of your summoned creatures a +4 Strength bonus.

Decomposition -- Wounded creatures suffer 1 extra hp/round.

Speed of the wind -- Grants +4 Dexterity, -4 Constitution.

Bringing the Parts Together

If any conflicts between the academies arise, the PCs may need to work directly with the two proprietors of the schools. What happens if the two are forced to resolve their differences with the PCs mediating? Can the PCs effectively mediate this situation? Do they even dare to try?

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